

Orange County Natural Areas Inventory

MIDDLE ENO RIVER BLUFFS AND SLOPES

Site Number: E13

Size: 396 acres in Orange County

[614 acres in Durham County]

Site Significance: State

USGS Quads: Hillsborough, NW Durham

SIGNIFICANT FEATURES: Several state-listed species are present here, including ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*, which is possibly extirpated from this site), Neuse River waterdog (*Necturus lewisi*), and Roanoke bass (*Ambloplites cavifrons*). Catawba rhododendron (*Rhododendron catawbiense*), maidenhair fern (*Adiantum pedatum*), galax (*Galax aphylla*), sumo mite (*Allothrombium* sp.), and pileated woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*) are all regionally rare species occurring in this section of the state park.

NATURAL COMMUNITIES: Mesic Mixed Hardwood Forest, Piedmont Acidic Cliff, Piedmont Heath Bluff, Pine—Oak / Heath, Piedmont Alluvial Forest

GENERAL DESCRIPTION: Originally known as “ERSP Cabelands and Rhododendron Bluff” (1988 inventory), the site was later expanded and renamed by the NC Natural Heritage Program. Several different habitats are found along the nearly two-mile stretch of the site in Orange County. At the driest extreme is a community of Virginia pine (*Pinus virginiana*), mountain laurel (*Kalmia latifolia*), sparkleberry (*Vaccinium arboreum*), galax (*Galax aphylla*), and trailing arbutus (*Epigaea repens*) growing on a steep, 80-foot bluff near the reservoir near the western boundary of this natural area. On gentler, less-exposed slopes occur mixed mesic hardwoods, such as beech (*Fagus grandifolia*), red oak (*Quercus rubra*), bitternut hickory (*Carya cordiformis*), and tulip poplar (*Liriodendron tulipifera*). At the bottom of these slopes, the herbaceous layer is very rich, as evidenced by the presence of maidenhair fern (*Adiantum pedatum*), wild ginger (*Asarum canadense*), and bloodroot (*Sanguinaria canadensis*). Ginseng (*Panax quinquefolius*) was reported from this area as late as 1972, but now appears to be extirpated from the Cabelands.

Another mesic community, a catawba rhododendron bluff on a steep northwest-facing slope, is located about one-half mile downstream from the area traditionally recognized as the Cabelands. Beech (*Fagus grandifolia*) and white oak (*Quercus alba*) form the canopy of this community. In addition to the three relatively undisturbed communities just described, there exists a mosaic of successional forest stands as a result of historic cultivation of the Cabelands. Black et al. (1972) mapped the forest stands of this area and listed over 110 vascular plant species that are present.

Along the mesic north-facing slopes are found the sumo mite (*Allothrombium* sp.), slimy salamander (*Plethodon glutinosus*), ovenbird (*Seiurus aurocapillus*), hooded warbler (*Wilsonia citrina*), and scarlet tanager (*Piranga olivacea*). The bottomlands, although narrow and somewhat disturbed, contain a large oxbow pool, which is the breeding site for spotted salamander (*Ambystoma maculatum*), marbled salamander (*A. opacum*), and several frog species. Birds inhabiting the bottomland and riparian strip include the barred owl (*Strix varia*), pileated woodpecker (*Dryocopus pileatus*), acadian flycatcher (*Empidonax virescens*),